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Indigenous People - Territory and Identity.

The case of Bolivia

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Introduction:

Indigenous people around the globe have experienced forced migration and displacement for centuries. Being dominated by colonial masters and national elites historically, indigenous people have been pushed away from their territories. In recent time these territories have been taken in possession of by multinational companies seeking for oil or timber in the indigenous people's territories.

The claim for territory and land rights by indigenous people represents a new trend, which is beneficiary for indigenous people. By way of the UN Forum for Indigenous Issues, indigenous peoples' problems, claims to national states and fight for rights, have reached a much broader audience, which creates new possibilities for indigenous groups.

The paper will centre on the concept of rights and link to the ongoing discussion among donor organizations and the UN system of indigenous peoples rights and the challenges this pose to nation state, indigenous groups and international organisations. It will analyse and discuss the measures taken by different actors in solving problems relating to indigenous people and rights to territories.

More specifically the paper will focus on the notion of "territory". Territories can be seen as representatives of identity and culture and therefore they represent far more than the physical land itself to indigenous people. Territory can be seen as a combat zone for practices regarding politics of place and indigenous identity and culture. This paper presents several core issues relevant to discussing territory and culture with in relation to the current situation in Bolivia: Cultural identity – ethnicity, indigenous people and territory, and human rights.

The core focus of the paper is: What are the challenges to indigenous people and the Bolivian State when territory becomes combat zone for practices regarding politics of place and indigenous identity and culture.

Bolivia.

Uneven distribution of land has been one of the greater challenges for many Latin American countries in recent time. For historical reasons at large part of the rural population in many Latin American countries is left with little or no access to land. This has led to different measures

including redistribution of land by governments across the region. In Bolivia the government has passed the law INRA (Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria). The INRA law introduces new aspects to the socio-economic function of land, especially regarding the indigenous population of Bolivia (Muñoz & Lavadenz 1997: 2). This comes after almost 50 years of diminishing plots for cultivation for small land owners.

In 1952 Bolivia experienced a revolution and former oligarchic rulers consisting of mine- and hacienda owners were overthrown. The revolutionary State, headed by MNR (Movimiento Revolucionario Nacional) nationalised the income generating industries - first and foremost the mines. The Bolivian state became very centralised and focused primarily on nationalised industries and big cities. An agrarian reform was passed in 1953, but after this the possibilities for development and progress in the rural areas were left behind by the Bolivian state. No new reforms to spur economic development reached the rural areas (Antezana, 1992), and due to division of land to all children, the plots became smaller and smaller.

The one-sided economical and political practice of staking on only mining- and other industries by the Bolivian State brought about serious problems, when the prices on Bolivia's most important export-good; tin, dropped drastically on the world market in 1985. The increased poverty and the social disorder following the economical collapse made the IMF and other donors initiate a structural adjustment programme in Bolivia. The presence of external donors combined with a pressure from the Bolivian population and a political wish for changes, fostered several reforms¹ in the beginning of the 1990's, among these the law on Participación Popular - a law on the creation of municipalities.

The rural areas of Bolivia have played a minor role in the state's economical development, due to the above mentioned nationalised mining industry. Once the agrarian reform of 1953 redistributed

¹ Among these are a education reform, an agrarian reform (INRA), a law of privatisation, and an alteration of the constitution admitting that Bolivia is a pluricultural and multiethnic society. More than 50% of the population is indigenous.

land to former workers on the haciendas, these areas, and the rest of rural Bolivia, have played a minor role in the state. The majority of the rural population is indigenous.²

As a consequence of the marginalised rural areas, Bolivia could be described as a weakly integrated territory (Vilas, 1997). This signifies that politics, development and economic growth only occurred in specific areas of the Bolivian territory, mostly the big cities³. Apart from this economical exclusion of the rural population, a cultural exclusion took place as well. The campesinos (peasants) were seen by city people and rural elites as “backward” people (Rivera, 1990; Rockefeller, 1998), who were not part of the “modern” Bolivian State. Seeing the indigenous population as backwards, and as an obstacle to the modernizing process of the nation is not a Bolivian phenomenon only (Mörner, 1987; Larson & Harris, 1995; Poole, 1997). Many Latin American countries have had a mono cultural nation-state as a model for the modernisation process during the 1950's and onwards. Only during the last ten years, the discourse on multiculturalism has gradually influenced the political agenda of many Latin American states (Brysk, 1994; Ströbele-Gregor, 1994).

Cultural Identity – Ethnicity.

Ethnic groups, like for example groups of indigenous people, have traditionally been seen as homogenous groups with the same “culture”, same traditions, same history etc within the group. This view of ethnic groups originates from the early anthropology, where anthropologists often did their field work in geographically secluded areas. When doing fieldwork, he or she, saw coherence in the societies studied. Everything seemed to “fit together” and had its own function⁴. Anthropology is about understanding the cultural “other”. This has its roots in colonialism. British anthropology was founded on the need by British administrators (Jenkins, XXXX:x). Anthropologists “invented” a notion to describe groups of people living in the colonies: Tribes. Tribe was something, that primitive people lived in – thus it divided “them” as primitive” from “us” –the civilized.

² The groups of indigenous people come to a 71% or 85% of the population, depending on the definition used. See Ströbele-Gregor, 1994:106.

³ And the agroindustrial areas of the Santa Cruz Department.

⁴ Like parts of the body fit together and work together (functionalism).

The notion of tribe served as a tool to understanding and describing primitive societies. It was a construction made by the anthropologists and it was a useful tool to describing “the other”. Due to power relations in academic world and colonial administration, the people, who were portrayed, did not have a say in this. Seeing the tribes as secluded, isolated and homogenous later proved to be wrong. There were lots of interaction between groups over large distances, and cultural traits were shared and not isolated to one group. But the anthropologists at that time did not acknowledge this for many reasons. One was to justify colonialism. If these people were primitive barbarians, the British Empire was doing them a favour by colonizing and civilizing them.

Anthropology’s core object is the cultural other. Every theory and concept within the field of anthropology is centred around this – the concept of ethnicity as well. Ethnicity became popular as concept within anthropology in the 1960’s. Before that anthropologists mostly were talking about culture, when defining groups. An early definition, which is still widely quoted is E.B. Tylors definition from 1871:

“Culture: That complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (E.B. Tylor: Primitive Culture, 1871)

Ethnicity – and maybe to a lesser degree culture - is something which characterizes other people than ourselves (Jenkins, XXXX:x). But on the other hand culture and ethnicity can be used as a strategy, which groups can “activate”.

“Culture: A relatively instable product of practice of meaning, of multiple and socially situated acts of attribution of meaning to the world, of multiple interpretations both within society and between members of society and anthropologists, that is, between societies” (Barth, 1989, quoted from Friedman, 1994)

Thus ethnicity is not something deeply rooted and traditional, which we can not liberate ourselves from. This perception of an ethnic group is represented here:

“An ethnic group:

1. is largely biologically self-perpetuating
2. shares fundamental cultural values, realized in overt unity in cultural forms
3. makes up a field of communication and interaction
4. has a membership which identifies itself and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order”

(Barth, 1969: Introduction)⁵

This functionalist model on culture/ethnic groups is static. If everything is connected and has its own place, how do you explain transformation and change? The only way this can happen is this functionalist model is, if it comes from outside.

The criticism of functionalism led to other models for explaining ethnic groups and cultural groups. Fredrik Barth wrote his famous “Ethnic Groups and Boundaries” in 1969 and it is still central to the understanding of ethnic groups. His contribution to the theory on ethnic groups was to focus on the *boundaries*. His basic question was: Why do we still have ethnic groups, when it seems like the content of, or the culture of, the ethnic group is under constant change?

“The emphasis is not so much upon the *substance or content* of ethnicity – what Barth called “the cultural stuff” – as upon the social processes which produce and reproduce, which organize, boundaries of identification and differentiation between ethnic collectivities.” (Jenkins:12).

Barth’s theory on ethnic groups was a major criticism of anthropology up till then. Anthropology as academic field “needed” the secluded “cultures”, where everybody sharing this culture was similar – and different from other cultures. This model was created as a consequence of the methodology of anthropology – the field work, where the anthropologist was living with a group of people for a longer period of time and “understanding everything” that was going on among these people. Since then anthropology has developed theories to be able to explain change, and to broaden the culture concept. Ethnic identity is generated, confirmed or transformed in the course of interaction and transaction between decision-making, strategizing individuals. It is the boundary-making that generate ethnic identity and culture – not the other way around. Ethnicity can thus be seen as a strategy more than something deeply rooted within: “Ethnicity is a social identity – created in social interaction. Ethnicity has a root in “shared meaning”. But this can be used instrumentally and is not fixed”.(Jenkins:13).

The view of an authentic culture as an autonomous internally coherent universe no longer seems tenable in a postcolonial world. Neither “we” nor “they” are as self-contained and homogenous as we/they once appeared. All of us inhabit an interdependent late 20th century world, which is at once marked by borrowing and lending across porous boundaries, and saturated with inequality, power and domination” (Rosaldo, 1988:87, quoted from Friedman, 1994:75)

⁵ Barth disagreed with this model for an ethnic group. He looks at ethnic groups from an instrumentalist point of view.

Indigenous People and the Rights Discussion

Indigenous people can under specific circumstances be regarded as internally displaced people and victims of different kinds of forced migration.

Over the past 50 years, forced migration has been a major obstacle to development as well as a consequence of mal-development and the fight against poverty; these are important issues in the world today. This poses serious challenges to states, international organisations and politics and not least the Danish government and the EU are debating various strategies to cope with the problem.

According to UNHCR statistics, it is estimated that there are about 14 million refugees and 20-25 million internally displaced people (IDP's) in the world today (UNHCR, 2002a). Internal displacement has indeed become one of the more pressing humanitarian, human rights and security problems confronting the international community (Korn, 1999).

There are three separate, although sometimes simultaneous and inter-related, types of forced migration and internal displacement. These can also be categorized according to their causalities. The three types of forced migration involve conflict-induced displacement (regional and local wars, violations of international law, and conflicts), development-induced displacement (famine, resource, and development aid projects) and disaster-induced displacement (natural and environmental conflicts and disasters) (<http://www.forcedmigration.org/whatisfm.htm>). These categories of forced migration are often studied by different academic communities (Van Hear, 2002, Paerregaard 1997; Stepputat & Sørensen, 2001); the causes are addressed by different groups of policy-makers, donors and agencies (UNHCR, 2002a; Cohen & Deng, 1998; Christensen, 2001), and the consequences addressed by different governmental, inter-governmental and non-governmental agencies, donors and organizations (Korn, 1999; US Committee for Refugees, 2001; Commission of the European Communities, 2002).

The indigenous people in Bolivia have experienced forced migration due to conflict over land. This is not recent, but has been going on since the Spanish invasion of the territory which today is Bolivia. One way of claiming and reclaiming territory and combat forced migration is by associating to the notion of self-determination

Self Determination

Self-determination is an important notion to indigenous people, because it gives them rights inside the framework of international conventions (Henriksen, 2001).

“For Indians, recognizing the inferiority of their own military might, there is only one quick way to obtain an advantageous position of power with respect to the state: they must obtain support from a third power, an alternative source that can provide sufficient backing that the state must, in a sense, at least pause and pay attention”.

(Urban & Sherzer, 1991: 9).

What the indigenous groups need support for is often their claim for land rights. Indigenous people are the original owners of land. And this causes conflict at a lot of different levels of society today. The principle of self-determination for peoples has been recognized since 1919, by the league of Nations, and later the UN. What is now the question is, who are the peoples that have the right of self-determination, which is now secured under international law (Henriksen, 2001). In 1989 the International Labour Organisation defined indigenous people:

“...Peoples in independent countries who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonisation or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions. (ILO convention 169. Henriksen 2001: 8). Even though the ILO stresses that this convention must not be taken to mean to have implications concerning rights, this ILO Convention 169 still has tremendous importance to indigenous groups. To the indigenous groups it was an important recognition of their right of self-determination – a right that has been ignored or fought by the nation state, where they live.

One of the most important aspects of self-determination is the issue of rights to land and resources. The rights to land are closely linked to the cultural use of the land. Indigenous peoples' relationships to their lands, territories and natural resources are such that they also cover important cultural aspects (Henriksen, 2001). This can be exemplified by looking at the Bolivian case. In Bolivia the landscape varies between three different zones: The rain forests, the valley areas, and the Andean highlands. In the Andean areas⁶ the indigenous people include two main groups: The Aymaras and the Quechuas. The Aymaras are people who have been in the area since before the Inca Empire conquered the Andean areas of present Bolivia, and the Quechuas are said to be

⁶ I did most of my fieldwork in the Potosí Department of Southern Bolivia.

descendants of the Incas. The two groups have different indigenous languages. They are mainly peasants with small individual plots of land. Originally they were organised in larger social entities called *ayllus*, where members of the *ayllus* own the land mutually (Cusicanqui, 1992). Owning the land mutually is part of their social organisation *as* indigenous group, and thus part of their culture. This is where the ILO convention 169 makes a difference for the indigenous people of the Andean highlands. Because they have inhabited the land at the time of colonisation, and because they use the land according to their own social or cultural institutions or organisation, they can in fact *claim* this land as indigenous peoples and according to international conventions. This has put a pressure on the Bolivian state. Since Bolivia is major recipient of foreign aid, the government also has to take the wishes of the donors into consideration and rule according to the international conventions on rights, and maybe especially human rights.

So, indigenous people in Bolivia are slowly gaining rights to land as indigenous people. If they can prove, that they have been there since before conquest – and in many cases they actually can do that, since the colonial administration was registering a lot of conflicts over land during the colonial period, and these documents are possible to find. In some *ayllus*, they also have kept documents for 300 years or more, and are now using them against the state to obtain the rights to their ancestral – as they claim it to be – land. That’s one side of the coin.

The other side is, that this stressing culture and right of land connected to the status of being *indigenous*, has also created some new strategies to this focussing on culture. Since land rights today increasingly are being connected to a status of being indigenous, some of the inhabitants of the rural areas, which for the last 50 years have been small farmers owning their own very small piece of land⁷, are returning to acknowledging their indigenous past and want to alter the individual ownership to land to collective ownership to territories.

50 years ago and onwards, the farmers union was very strong in some parts of the Andean area, and the small peasants were organised in these union. The union fought a socialist class struggle against the Bolivian state. In this discourse there was no room for enhancing anything indigenous, and part of the rural population was redefined as “campesinos”. Today the discourse is changing again. The *campesinos* now see an opportunity for bettering their life by “returning” to a more indigenous mode of organisation in recreating the *ayllus* of their area, re-establishing the social organisation and reclaiming collective ownership to land. As a consequence a lot of discussion is going on in

⁷ Due to land distribution in 1953, where landless peasants received plots of land on former haciendas

Bolivia about who are “really” indigenous, and who are not. The interesting point to make here is that being indigenous in this case does not have so much to do with “culture and tradition”, but with obtaining land rights. Culture can in this case be seen as a practice. It is not so, that “culture” has no meaning for the groups. It does have meaning as a way of life, but it has even greater meaning as a political instrument in the fight for land rights.

Indigenous People on the global scene.

In many third world countries, leaders are faced with the need for change. Decentralisation- and democratisation processes are introduced in many of these countries. Countries with large indigenous populations are faced with special challenges in getting these groups to become a part of the process.

Indigenous people have been organising in political pressure groups and social movements. This rise of indigenous political movements can be perceived from different angles:

- 1) From the point of view of the governments, the indigenous movements present a challenge to different activities needed in the Latin American countries today. Stagnant economies, large bureaucratic sector and traditional forces (church, military, large land-owners) are all factors that need to be dealt with along with incorporating indigenous groups in the state as well.
- 2) The indigenous leaders do not always regard the democratisation process as an advantage. They often see it as yet another example of exploitation from a government, which they are not used to offering anything interesting to the indigenous people. More often governments fight indigenous peoples’ right to land and resources, so the indigenous leaders seem to have good reasons for distrusting democratisation proposals coming from the government (Van Cott, 1994).
- 3) A third angle is related to the relation between the indigenous people, governments and democratisation processes. The democratisation process can in fact be of mutual benefit to both government and indigenous groups. This requires that the democratisation laws allow the indigenous people to maintain their social organisation and land rights. Also it requires that the governments incorporate the indigenous people *as indigenous* and do not attempt to “civilize” or transform indigenous people to citizens in an assimilation process, which will attempt to eliminate the indigenous group and its culture, traditions and way of life.

Some argue that it is not possible to have a democratisation process, where you on the one hand strive to unify national interests *and* protect the interests of a subculture, which is here protection of the indigenous groups (Van Cott, 1994).

The history of the indigenous people of Latin America is long. They became “indigenous” when the colonies were established, and have since then lived in a relation to the colonizers, which can most often be characterized as resistance. One way or another, the leaders of the colonies have wished to make indigenous people part of the society by transforming them, and indigenous people have resisted this..

There have been three strategies used by the people in power towards indigenous groups:

- 1) Extinction, which was especially used, when others wanted the land and resources, that the indigenous people owned
- 2) Encapsulation, which is confinement of indigenous populations in reservations in remote areas, with little possibility of maintaining life for the indigenous group.
- 3) The third one is integration or assimilation into the mestizo majority society (Van Cott, 1994).

These strategies have been used around the North and South American continents, but they have also created resistance, which has resulted in a rising indigenous movement across the borders of the different nation-states. The meeting between different indigenous leaders in Patzcuaro, Mexico in 1940 was an important stepping stone in the formation of indigenous movements in North and South America (Van Cott, 1994).

The two main theories within social science in the 1950's and 60's; liberalism and Marxism, had different views on the indigenous people and their position in society. They had one thing in common though: They both saw the indigenous people as a problem. Liberals saw the indigenous people as a group which was backwards and underdeveloped, because of their way of life, whereas the Marxist regarded the indigenous people as an economically oppressed lower class, where the oppression was common for all poor people. The indigenous people should therefore work with other lower class and poor people in a political process of a class struggle to overturn the capitalist society.

The indigenous people themselves were of course not asked by neither liberals nor Marxists, whether they agreed on the political programs, that were designed for them. On the other hand, most indigenous groups rejected both sides, and turned towards themselves into a more or less self desired isolation from different political programs.

In the 70's an international indigenous movement emerged slowly by way of different international conferences held by church organisations and NGO's, which gathered indigenous groups from both North and South America. A key concept of indigenous groups is, as mentioned before: *Self determination*.

There are two main reasons for this: Self determination has a basis in international law, where indigenous groups can define themselves as peoples, and thus claim to be protected by UN conventions (Della Porta, 1999). Another reason is that self-determination stresses the indigenous groups *own* definitions of who they are as a group inside and different from the nation state. They do not wish to be seen as minorities, who normally are seen as groups, which eventually will be assimilated into the majority society or culture.

The self definition as "peoples" is contested inside and outside the UN system. The question is whether it goes for "indigenous peoples" as well. Since indigenous people are groups with cultural, linguistic and historical ties to the territories they inhabit, they could be recognised as peoples according to UN standards. But the UN consists of nation-states, which are not willing to give too many rights to its groups of indigenous people, since this would endanger the stability of the nation-state (Van Cott, 1994). The nation-state in most postcolonial areas are, after all, arbitrary entities, where the borderlines were drawn according to power relations in the colonising states, and not according to the structures of indigenous societies, which already inhabited the areas. We can take South America as an example: The division of South America between the Spaniards and the Portuguese took place in 1494, when the Pope, after complaints by the Portuguese, because of Spanish expansion in the colonies, divided South America in two. He drew a line, which today separates Brazil and the Spanish speaking South America, and thus separated the colonies from each other. One part for Spain, another for Brazil. This line was called the Tordesillas line, after the town in Spain, where the meeting took place between the Pope and representatives of the Spanish and the Portuguese kings. Portugal got the eastern part of South America and all the islands between South America and Portugal. Spain got the rest of South America and Central America.

The later republics were created from the Spanish and Portuguese administrative entities, and had nothing to do with the indigenous people, who originally inhabited the areas. Therefore we see in Latin America and other parts of the third world today, members of the same ethnic groups living in different countries.

Even though indigenous people are still struggling to be recognised as “peoples” in the UN formulation, they have gained something on the international arena. The convention 169 of the ILO is very important for the indigenous groups, when talking about international recognition. Furthermore the UN decade of indigenous peoples has had its impact.

The Human Rights Regime is another supporter of indigenous rights⁸. Brysk (1994) presents the argument of the “international regime approach” as a useful instrument to use in understanding indigenous groups on the global scene. Especially the strategic use of information networks is useful for the indigenous groups or movements - one recent example is the Zapatista movement in Chiapas, Mexico.

The indigenous people have begun to make use of international arenas, or regimes, because the national governments in the states they inhabit have been opposing the demands that the indigenous groups have posed regarding rights to living their life according to culture and traditions, and here especially rights to the use of land and resources. (Brysk, 1994: 33ff)

One of the places, where indigenous people’s movements have tried to influence issues dealt with and decisions taken, is within the UN system, as I have mentioned before. The presence of political authority on international level and the existence of supranational power centres, such as the European Community and the United Nations offer new political opportunities and make way for globalisation of political protest. Through history, social movements have protested to different levels of authority. Before the creation of the nation-state in Europe, social movements had to address their action on the local level to local authorities. One can hardly call these groups of discontented groups of for example peasants or merchants for social movements, as we know them today. It is not until the creation of a national level, that social movements gain influence. They organise within a nation-state on a national level, and thus are bigger and expressing more people’s

⁸ I define a regime as a “set of rules, which govern state action in particular areas”. Jackson and Sørensen: Introduction to International Relations, 1999.

discontent. This shift to national collective action transformed to international collective action with the creation of supra-national organisations, like the UN.

The organisation of the UN has allowed other actors than states to take part in its work, but with a different position, since only member states have the right to vote. Even so, and especially since the Rio conference, 1992, the number of social movements organisations allowed to participate in UN activities has grown. In the case of indigenous people's movements, they have been challenging the nation-state for years concerning local matters of resistance against invaders who have claimed the lands and tried to change their culture and way of life. They have through history put up resistance against this, first by armed conflict with the invaders, next by trying to negotiate with the local bosses. At the end of the 19th century the indigenous issue reached the national level. Indigenous people began to address their demands to the governments. But due to lack of results on this national level, the indigenous people have more recently addressed their demands to international organisations, hoping that this would help them in their fight against the national governments and local bosses, since governments are compelled by for example UN conventions and declarations.

The formation of supra national organisations is partly a consequence of the globalisation of society. The modernisation process has entered the global arena and has contributed to emergence of supranational powers, which can regulate the processes within and between the global structures. These structures emerged in the twentieth century, and have to deal with the globalisation of modern society. They have to regulate problems shared by the nations belonging to these structures. Some supra-national structures imply a loss of sovereignty for the nation-state. This goes for example for the European Community. Others, like the UN, do not imply this loss of sovereignty. But since UN does not have a coercive power, it could be questioned whether UN is a political power structure?

It might not be, but the UN does set the agenda within the different regimes, and nation-states do have an interest in following the treaties and conventions agreed on in the UN to be member of the international society. What the UN does is primarily elaborate normative rules. The UN is thus an important actor for the indigenous people's organisations to deal with in order to obtain rights globally and within the nation state, which they live in. One of the major roles of the UN is to create a forum, where: "Nation-states can build an international regime, that is, governing arrangements

that affect every participant in the negotiation by creating norms and procedures that regularize their behaviour on specific arenas”(Della Porta (ed.): 1999:151).

This normative role of the UN is very important to the indigenous groups, since UN is not only an assembly of nation states. It is also a centre, where organised groups from civil society can address their demands and challenge decisions. The UN has from the beginning been open to social movements’ organisations. This is stated in the article 71. The UN realised from the beginning the importance of collaborating with actors from civil society, especially within the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Different groups can make oral and written statements during the meetings at different levels, but they cannot vote. And only trans-national social movements can participate and be granted consultative status.

There are two main reasons for the UN system to be open to outside actors within the Economic and Social Council:

- 1) In the elaboration of the normative frameworks, the UN is in need of resources. Social movements present an important source of resources. Indigenous groups, for example, have the exact knowledge of the problems they are faced with, and they have an interest in voicing them. So by collaborating with different indigenous groups, the UN administration have easy access to information, information it would have taken months for an UN expert to gather, if he or she could gather it at all, since these are very complex issues, that demand some knowledge. The grass root knowledge, that indigenous groups possess this way becomes present within the UN administration.
- 2) Another reason why the UN administration finds the indigenous groups important actors, is because they can distribute UN declarations, resolutions and norms in the nation-states, where they belong and to a much wider public, than the UN channels of communication can allow. The grass roots organisations and/or indigenous groups are effective in spreading information about the existence of norms that are useful to the population for whom they have been created. And they can again use the knowledge of the norms and resolutions in challenging the nation states, when the states do not respect resolutions they themselves have signed.

This informal strategy of the UN administration has expanded the supranational political opportunities for social movements (Della Porta, 1999).

“In the Indigenous peoples area, human rights and indigenous peoples’ organisations have taken on an increasingly important role within the UN, as their number grows year by year and, above all, as

they play a more active role. Since the start of the negotiations on the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, they have influenced the Declaration by drafting it, in collaboration with the UN administration, though the process is very slow.”(Della Porta, 1999:157).

The Indigenous movement is in fact very young. Initiated in the 1940's it only gained power in the late 1970's. In 1957, the first convention affecting indigenous peoples was agreed on by the ILO. It recommended protection of indigenous and tribal populations and was the first legal tool to protect the rights of these people. Then nothing was done until the late 70's. In 1977 the UN organised the first international conference on the topic of indigenous peoples and their rights. Following this, grass roots organisations started pressuring the UN to put the issue of indigenous people's rights on its political agenda. In 1981 human rights and indigenous peoples organisations held another conference, and in 1982 the UN created a new human rights structure: *The working group on indigenous populations*. The working group consisted of representatives of nation states, UN experts, human rights and indigenous peoples' organisations.

The working group had two main tasks: First it reviewed the national legal tools concerning the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people, and second its most important long term goal was the elaboration of the *Universal Declaration of the rights of the Indigenous Peoples*. The work of the working group is now done by the Forum for Indigenous Issues, established in 2001, with representatives from States and indigenous people. The Forum has consultative status.

In the UN structure, the possibilities of challenging nation states with demands from indigenous groups within the nation states improve, when the indigenous groups work together in trans-national organisations and finding consensus of demands, whereby they can challenge their nation states on an international level within the UN structure. If the indigenous movements have a common view on specific topics in the global public arena, this increases the chances to influence the elaboration of international norms in the UN.

Indigenous people are faced with a range of threats: Invasions of their territories, displacements of their population, violence against indigenous leaders, destruction of their medical knowledge, by destruction of medical plants in the rainforests, slavery, acculturation of their children through integration in national schools.

Despite the diversity of problems faced by indigenous peoples around the world, one thing can be agreed upon among the indigenous groups, and that is demanding the right to *self-determination*.

Four major demands within the demand of self-determination has been expressed:

Self-determination for indigenous peoples:

- Respect of their rights: political, economical, social and cultural rights.
- Territorial integrity: demarcation and control of their land
- Preservation of their culture: right to practise and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs, as well as the protection of their cultural, intellectual and scientific property
- Physical integrity: protection against genocide or other acts of violence.

(Della Porta, 1999:163).

On the international level, the social movements have to form consensus on central issues, as we saw with the self-determination in the example of indigenous people. And they have to spread the news, so to speak, through the social movements. The consensus on a specific issue is brought to the actors of the supranational organisations, in this case the UN, where it is negotiated, also with the nation states, which might be in conflict with the indigenous organisations whose demands are being treated. Thus the negotiations reach the international level, which sometimes overrule decisions taken in the nation states. This leads to creation of international norms, which are spread by national states, social movements, UN administration and the mass media. This way movements can make use of the supra national level to obtain their goals.

A concrete example of this is the indigenous movements in Bolivia. There the indigenous movement is very young. Even though the indigenous people are the majority (about 75%) of the Bolivian population, they have been excluded from power for more than 500 years. But now something seems to be happening.

On the international level there is an awareness of these problems in the countries going through democratisation processes. Donors like the Danish development organisation, Danida are aware of that there are special interests to take into account in countries with an indigenous population, and that they want to support the establishment of local autonomy that accommodate ethnic, cultural and religious diversity.

Indigenous people in Bolivia

A large group of small peasants, the campesinos, was formed in the process of the 1952 revolution. From 1952 to the beginning of the 1980's, the Bolivian government was following the modernisation path and tried to assimilate, or civilise, its' indigenous population. This was done primarily by using the school system. Teaching was done only in Spanish and not in the indigenous languages, of which there are 34 in Bolivia. Through the school system, a citizen was supposed to be born, a civilised Bolivian citizen, free and equal.

In 1985 the prices on tin, which was Bolivia's main export good, fell drastically on the world markets. Bolivia faced bankruptcy. IMF and the World Bank intervened with a structural adjustment program, which has had all the well known negative effects on the social areas of society. No money to spend on schools, hospitals, unemployed people, rise in poverty.

The Bolivian State lacked income after the decline of the tin prices. The agricultural sector had not had any development measures implemented by the state since the revolution in 1952. The reason for this neglect of the agricultural sector was that the state could rely on income by exporting minerals from the nationalised mines.

The rural areas were "left behind", and the inheritance practice among the small peasants had split up the land, that the peasants received after the revolution.

New strategies were needed. The government created the reform of Participación Popular, popular participation, which is a decentralisation and democratisation reform of the local areas and the law INRA on redistribution of territory. This was done after pressure from international donors and from indigenous movements.

Conclusion

In Participación Popular and INRA, the indigenous people are regarded as indigenous, and their original organisations and thus their social structure and their way of cultivating the land is taken into consideration. Social structure and cultivation of land is intimately connected. The indigenous groups were, and some still are, organised in the ayllus, which own and cultivate the land commonly. This is the situation in the Andean areas. The social organisation in the ayllus with its appointed leaders has a role to play locally in the municipal governments as original indigenous organisation. And this is very new. This is taking the self definition into the laws saying that the groups can participate in the decentralisation process and democratisation as indigenous groups and with the special social organisation, culture, way of using land etc.

Regarding the territory, which is redistributed by way of the law INRA, the indigenous people regard this land as “theirs” according to tradition and culture. And the law opens up for this interpretation of affiliation to land and granting land to indigenous groups. As mentioned the definition of “culture and tradition” is not a given, neither theoretically or within the law. This way indigenous people, State and other stakeholders challenge each other in the negotiation over land. The new actors on the international level: international organisations and foreign donors, seem to support indigenous people in Bolivia in their claims to land. The use of culture and identity as practice and linking culture and identity to the indigenous rights’ discussion appear to have given indigenous groups new room for manoeuvre inside the state of Bolivia. Territory is a combat zone, but with many actors – both nationally and internationally. Indigenous people, who have experienced displacement from their original territories are now able to reclaim the territories and return from displacement.

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